

Serious Advice
T O
P E R S O N S

Who have been

S I C K,

*To be put into their Hands as
soon as they are Recover'd.*

W I T H

A Thanksgiving for Recovery.

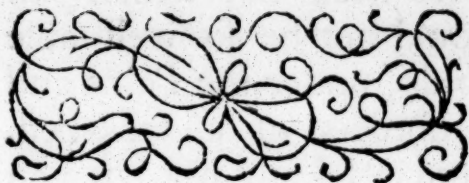
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SERIOUS ADVICE to a
Person recovered from
SICKNESS.

NEIGHBOUR,

SINCE it hath
pleased God to
recover you from
your late Sick-
ness, and to grant you a
longer Continuance in the
World ; I hope one of
the first Things in your
Thoughts, is to Reflect
upon the Condition you
A 2 have

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have been in ; which you could not be so well able to do, under the Pains and Disorders of a Sick-bed. And as I doubt not but you are seriously disposed to Consideration, especially after such a Warning of Mortality as you have had ; so I assure myself that you will esteem it an Act of true Friendship in me, that I offer you my Assistance therein ; having no other Intention in doing it, but to confirm the good Dispositions which the Sight of the Grave hath raised and improved, but which a new Prospect of Life will be apt to destroy again, unless

recovered from Sickneſs. 5
leſs they be renewed upon
the Mind by ſerious Con-
ſideration on your Part.

I. The firſt Step then,
towards our reaping the
Benefits which God de-
ſigns in viſiting us, is to
conſider Sickneſs, not ſo
much in the Natural, as
the Religious Senſe ; not
as it takes away our natural
Strength and Spirits, and
ſo diſables us for the Bu-
ſineſs of this World ; but
as it is a nearer View of
Death, and a ſenſible Proof
of the Frailty of our Na-
ture, and thereupon a ſea-
ſonable Warning to be in
a conſtant Preparation for
our End. In like Man-

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ner, the Pains and Agonies that we feel in the Time of Sickneſs, are not to be conſidered barely as an Uneaſineſs to the Body, but more eſpecially as a Leſſon to the Soul, to make it leſs fond of continuing in this painful State, and more willing to be removed, whenever it ſhall pleaſe God to call. Nor is the Time of Continuance of Sickneſs to be reflected on as ſo much loſt from the Buſineſs or Pleaſures of Life, but rather as a Check that God gives to our worldly Purſuits, in order to make Way for Thoughts and
Con-

recovered from Sicknefs. 7

Considerations of a Heavenly Nature.

II. For, as in all the other Dispensations of Life, so particularly in this of Sicknefs, you must have your Eye chiefly upon God, or else you will never make a right Judgment nor a right Use of it. If you look no farther than the Body, or to what Cause or Accident the Indisposition was immediately owing, the Effects will reach no farther than the Body ; nor will your Sicknefs work any other Care or Concern in you, than how to remove the Cause, and avoid the Accident for the Time to come. But

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certainly, as God can do nothing but for wise and good Ends ; so when he visits us with Sickness, it cannot be the only or chief End he aims at, to afflict and punish the Body ; because this Life is not the proper Season of Punishment for Sin ; and to think that God grieves and afflicts his Creatures for no other Reason but because it is in his Power to do it, or because he chooses it, and delights in it, is by no Means consistent with the Divine Goodness. He himself assures us, (*Lam. iii. 3.*) that *he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the Children of men ;*

recovered from Sickness. 9

men ; and if he sends Sickness unwillingly, this implies that he would not send it at all, if something in our Condition did not require it, and some Benefits were not to be conveyed to us by it. But now it is certain, that no Temporal Benefits accrue to us by Sickness, which is a manifest Prejudice to the Body and Estate ; and therefore the Benefit that God designs by it, must be of a Spiritual Nature, for the Good of the Soul ; and so when the Scripture speaks of God's Unwillingness to afflict the Body, the Meaning must be, that he would not do

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it, if it were not the ordinary Means of conveying Good to the Soul. And since the first Foundation of the Good that Sickneſs works, is the Bringing us to a ſerious Conſideration of our future State: This ſhews us, that the Bed of Sickneſs muſt not be forgotten, nor the Thoughts of it laid aſide, as ſoon as we are reſtored to our Bodily Health and Strength. That is rather the proper Time of ſetting ourſelves to think regularly and effectually; when our bodily Pains are removed or abated, and God hath ſet the Terrors of Death at a greater

recovered from Sicknefs. I I

er Distance from us, and so our Minds are at Liberty to reflect with due Attention and Deliberation.

III. When you have considered the true End of God's visiting Mankind in general ; go on, and apply this to your own Condition in particular, by satisfying yourself of the Need and Occasion you had to be thus visited by the Hand of God. Do but look back upon your former Life, and you will probably find, that 'till then you had been supine and lukewarm in Religion, and did want to be awakened out of that Spiritual Sleep, into a Sense of your

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Duty : That you encouraged yourself in Sin by setting Death and a future State far from you ; and therefore needed to be roused from your Security, by a nearer View and Apprehension of them : That you had long forgotten and neglected God, and had need to be thus smitten with his Hand, to bring you to a Sense of his Power and Justice : That Ease and Health had betrayed you into too great a Fondness for the Delights and Interests of this World, and so it was necessary for God to interrupt your Enjoyment, and teach you the Folly of setting

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ting your Heart on this
World, by reminding you
of the Uncertainty of your
Continuance in it.

THEſe and the like Re-
flections upon the Follies
and Failings of your former
State, will ſhew you the
Goodneſs and Mercy of
God in viſiting you with
Sickneſs: You will ſee that
there was a great deal of
Corruption in your Heart,
which could not be diſco-
vered and let out, but by
putting you to ſome Pain;
and that whatever you have
endured, is not to be com-
pared to the Miſery you had
been in, if a Courſe of Eaſe
and Health had ſtill gone
on

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on to hide that Spiritual Corruption from you. And the Sense of God's Goodness herein, will convince you, that the Stripes you have received were, the Chastisements of a tender Father, to whose Hand you therefore listen and submit with all Humility and Thankfulness, saying as *David* did in the like Case, (Psal. cxix. 75,) *I know, O Lord, that thou of very faithfulness hast caused me to be troubled; and ver. 71. It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy Statutes.*

IV. When you have duly reflected what the State
of

recovered from Sickneſs. 15

of your Soul was before the Time of Sickneſs, and have made yourſelf ſenſible of the Goodneſs of God in ſending it ; go on and conſider ſeriouſly, what your Condition would have been if this Sickneſs had proved your Laſt ; How your Accounts ſtood with God, and what Preparation you had been in to meet Death ; Whether it would not have found you going on in ſome known Sin, or indulging yourſelf over-much in the Pleaſures and Enjoyments of Life : Whether you had in any Measure applied yourſelf to the Study and Practice of God's Laws,
and

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and lived in a due Regard to the Holy Ordinances of Prayer, Preaching, and the Blessed Sacrament: In short, consider seriously, whether, before Sickneſs came, you had not thought too little of another Life, and whether Death, if it had then come, would not have been a very great Surprize to you. And if upon this Enquiry into the Frame of your Soul before Sickneſs, you ſee that it had found you in a finful or lukewarm, that is, in an unprepared State ; you then know, that if it had not pleaſed God to ſpare you, you had been doomed ere
this

recovered from Sickness. 17

this to irrecoverable Destruction. And the Sense of this should oblige you to employ all the Powers of Body and Soul, in Praising and Blessing God for his unspeakable Mercy and Goodness, and should also be a Warning never to run such a desperate Hazard again, but to set yourself seriously to think of Death, and not to be at Ease in your Mind, till you find you are prepared for it; that so (as our Saviour speaks) *whenever your Lord comes, you may be sure to be found watching.*

V. Next to the Divine Goodness, first in Visiting
you

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you with Sickness, and then in delivering you from Death ; remember - what your own Thoughts and Resolutions were, while you lay upon your Sick-bed.

Did you not think it great Folly, to have let so much Time pass away with so little Preparation for your future State ! Now God hath given you more Time, let it be your Care to employ it more wisely.

Did you not wish, over and over, that Heaven and the Happiness thereof had been your chief Care ? Why then, make Amends for former Neglects, by your
future

recovered from Sickness. 19
future Diligence in the
Work of your Salvation.

Could you not have been content to give all the World, if it had been yours, for a little Space to consider better, and to make your Peace with God? Now a longer Space is granted you, forget not how valuable you thought it, but make it a real Blessing to you, by improving it to the Ends, for which you so earnestly wished and prayed for it.

Did you not make repeated Promises and Resolutions, that if it should please God to prolong your Life, you would live to him, and serve him Faithfully

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fully and Sincerely all your Days? You see, God hath granted what you desired, and now he expects that you perform what you promised: He vouchsafes you longer Life, to prove whether your Resolutions were sincere and in Earnest; and if you forget them, you provoke him either to bring upon you some heavier Judgment, to try how far that will work; or (which is far more terrible) to give you up to final Destruction, when he sees that neither his Judgments can awaken you, nor your own Promises and Resolutions bind you.

When

recovered from Sicknefs. 21

When thou vowest a Vow unto God (saith the wise Man, Eccl. v. 4.) defer not to pay it. Every Promise and Resolution you made in your Sicknefs, was in the Nature of a solemn Vow to God; and the Sincerity of that Vow depends not so much upon your Intentions while you were sick, as upon your Performances now you are well. If you had died, none but God could have judged of your Sincerity: But now you live, if you forget your Vow, this will be a plain and open Declaration that it was only the Effects of the Fears and Terrors of Death;

22 *Advice to a Person*

Death ; it will show, that you have profited nothing by the Chastisements of your Heavenly Father, but are one of those perverse and untractable Children, who will be no longer good than they see the Rod hanging over them. But I am persuaded better Things of you, and do heartily hope that your late Promises and Resolutions are fresh in your Memory, and that you are making haste to ease your Mind of whatever Burden you found upon it, in the Time of your Sicknefs ; that is, in few Words, that you are now doing,

recovered from Sicknefs. 23

doing, whatever you then wished had been done.

VI. Particularly, If your Conscience did then charge you with any Act of Injustice, delay not to make Restitution to the utmost of your Power : If your Sicknefs found you in a State of Enmity with any Person, do your Part towards a speedy Reconciliation ; If you had not then settled your worldly Concerns, defer not to settle them now in such Manner as may best preserve Peace among those you leave behind, whenever it shall please God to take you away : If you found great Comfort

24 *Advice to a Person*

fort of Mind, in being joined by the Minister and other good Christians, in Prayer to God ; now you are released from your Confinement, seek and enjoy the same Comfort in a serious and diligent Attendance on the Worship of the Church: If in that weak Condition of Body and Mind, you desired to be Partaker of the Blessed Sacrament, and found yourself grieved that you had not frequented it more in the Time of your Health ; you see, it hath pleased God to restore your Health, and therewith an Ability of considering and preparing yourself ; fail not therefore

recovered from Sickneſs. 25

therefore to come frequently to the Lord's Table, during the Remainder of your Life. In ſhort, recollect diligently, what were the Sins, Failings and Neglects, that you then found yourſelf moſt ſenſibly grieved and concerned at, and let it be your firſt and immediate Care to ſet theſe right; aſſuring yourſelf, that the Condition of your Soul is really ſuch as you ſaw it in the Time of your Sickneſs, and eſteeming it the greateſt Bleſſing of your Recovery, that it gives you Time and Opportunity to clear the Guilt of your former Life, and to prepare for

B

your

26 *Advice to a Person*

your future Account, by a speedy Course of Repentance and Amendment.

VII. There are many Things concur, in the Time of Sickness, to raise good Resolutions in the Hearts of Men; as the Thoughts of present Death, the immediate Prospect of a future State, and an Unfitness of Body and Mind to attend the Cares, or relish the Pleasures of this World. But when Health returns, these Motives to Seriousness do not only cease, but are succeeded by Motives to Lukewarmness and Forgetfulness; as, the Hopes of long Life, the Distance
of

recovered from Sicknefs. 27

of a future Account, and a Delight in the Business and Entertainments of the World. It is therefore necessary, now you are restored to Health, to be warned of these Temptations, in order to be prepared against them ; considering yourself not as Discharged, but only Reprieved from Death ; and that as God granted the Reprieve, so none but God can tell how long or short it is to be : That the Preparation for your future Account is not the Work of a dying Bed, but the Business of your whole Life ; and the more of Life is spent, the more

28 *Advice to a Person*

diligently are you concerned to attend this Work. That as God sent Sickness, to turn your Thoughts upon your Spiritual State, and to shew you the many Imperfections in it; so he has given you Health, that you may have Space and Opportunity to supply and amend these Imperfections; That God, who is training you up for a future State, cannot be supposed to have prolonged your Life, only that you may have the Pleasure to eat and drink so many Days, and sleep so many Nights longer in this World; but as in all his other Dispensations, so particularly

recovered from Sickness. 29

particularly in these of Sickness and Health, his great Design is, to engage us in a diligent Pursuit of our future Happiness; by Sickness to moderate our Desires after this World, and mind us of our Condition in the next; and by Health, to give us the Opportunity of approving ourselves to Him, and preparing us for Heaven, by a steadfast Course of Obedience and Devotion.

VIII. Take therefore this merciful Warning that God has given you, and improve it diligently to the Purposes intended; remembering that it will be a proportionable

30 *Advice to a Person*

Aggravation of your Guilt, if you resist these gracious Endeavours for the-Salvation of your Soul, and give no Proofs of your growing better under his Hand. Consider also, that this may possibly be the last Warning, with Time for Repentance and Amendment, that he will give, and that your next Sicknes may end in Death, or (wh ch worse) Death mayi seize you on a sudder, without any Warning at all. And if you now despise his Chastening, and thereby provoke him to give you up to sudder Destruction (as nothing is more like to
pro-

recovered from Sickneſs. 31
voke him to it) you will
have nothing to blame but
your own Perverſeneſs, in
not complying with the
Methods which he had
taken for your Salvation.

Do not then trifle with
God; but while he gives
you Opportunity, be wiſe
unto Salvation. He has
been adminiſtring Sickneſs
in the Nature of a Reme-
dy to your Soul, and now
that is over, he is waiting
to ſee what good Effects it
has had; what Changes
it has wrought in the
Thoughts and Reſolutions
of your Heart; how much
it has taken off your Mind
from the Delights of this
B 4 World,

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World, and turned your Desires upon Heaven and the Things of the next Life; how much more serious and careful of your Ways you will be for the Time to come, than you have hitherto been; how heartily you will set yourself on one hand, to root out all evil Habits, and on the other hand, to attain the Christian Graces and Virtues which are wanting in you. In short, God has in great Mercy given you new Life, and he is now waiting to see whether you will become a new Man.

And while he is thus Waiting for You, how can
you

recovered from Sicknefs. 33

you forget and neglect *Him*? Is God so greatly concerned for you, and will you have no Concern for yourself? When you see him thus labouring, both in the Way of Mercy and Judgment, for the Salvation of your Soul, how can you resist so much Goodness? how dare you provoke so much Power? You have already been under the Hand of God in your late Sicknefs, and what you have hitherto felt has been the Chastisement of a tender Father; and if you will be wise, it may be improved into the greatest Blessing he could have

34 *Advice to a Person*

sent ; but if you will not listen to his Correction, you do in effect defy him, and cast him off, and you may find the next Return of his Hand, to be changed from the Chastisement of a tender Father into the Vengeance of an angry G O D.

IX. I write not this, as if I thought you had forgot your late Sickness, or had been Chastised and Visited in vain ; but being sincerely desirous of your Spiritual Welfare, I omit no Argument, either of Love or Fear, Mercy or Judgment, that may help to cherish and keep alive the good Thoughts and Resolu-

recovered from Sickneſs. 35

Reſolutions which your late Sickneſs hath raiſed in you. Theſe, for ought you can yet tell, were only the Effects of the Fears and Terrors you were under, and now is the Time to make it appear, that you meant them in earneſt, and that they are your ſettled Choice and Judgment; which, I hope, is what you have not only reſolved to do, but what you are now doing, in a juſt Senſe of the Uncertainty of Life, and of the Happineſs of being always in a Preparation for Death. And that God will be pleaſed to give you Grace and Strength to per-

36 *Advice to a Person, &c.*
severe in your good Reso-
lutions, and to continue
stedfast in the Way that
leads to Eternal Life, is
the hearty Prayer of

Your Affectionate

Brother and

PASTOR.

A

A THANKSGIVING
after Recovery from
SICKNESS.

MOST Gracious
and Merciful
God, to whom alone
belong the Issues of
Life and Death; I
thy unworthy Servant,
who have been under
thy afflicting Hand,
and am raised again
from the Bed of Sick-
ness, do here present
myself before Thee in
a thankful Sense of thy
great Mercy and Good-
ness

38 *A Thanksgiving after*
ness towards me. Thou
hast chast'ned and cor-
rected me, but thou
hast not given me over
unto Death. Thou
hast saved my Life
from Destruction, and
crowned me with Mer-
cy and Loving-kind-
ness. Blessed be thy
Holy Name for sup-
porting me under the
Pain and Anguish of
my Sick-Bed, for the
seasonable Supplies of
Patience and Comfort,
which

Recovery from Sicknefs. 39

which thou didst graciously afford me, and for Restoring me in thy good Time to the Blessings of Health and Strength *.

** When any Person, during the Time of Sicknefs, hath been Light-headed, he or she may add, [and to the perfect Use of my Reason and Understanding.]*

But I know, O Lord, that the Pain and Weakness wherewith thou hast visited me, were not for the Punishment of my Body, but for the Improvement of my Soul; to
let

40 *A Thanksgiving after*
let me see the Frailty
of my Nature, and the
Uncertainty of my
Life ; to wean me
from the Delights of
this World, and to en-
gage me in a serious
Preparation for the
next : In all which I
thankfully acknow-
ledge thy fatherly Care
over me, and that thou
of very Faithfulness
hast caused me to be
afflicted.

I adore the Riches
of thy Goodnefs, in
giving me a right
Knowledge of Thee
and thy Ways in thefe
thy Dispensations to
me, and in making
them the happy Means
to bring me to a Senfe
of the Evil of my Do-
ings, and to a ferious
Confideration of my
future State. Before I
was afflicted, I went
aftray ; I forgot my
Duty to Thee, and fol-
lowed

42 *A Thanksgiving after*
lowed the Imaginations of my own Heart ; my Thoughts were taken up with the Business and Entertainments of this World, and the Care of my Soul was neglected and forgotten. But thy Chastisements have brought me back into the right Way ; and now, to my unspeakable Comfort and Happiness, my Affections are placed upon the Things

Things Above, and the Things that concern my everlasting Salvation. To thee, therefore, O my God, who hast not cut me off in the midst of my Sins, but hast in great Mercy given me Space for Repentance and Amendment ; to thee will I live, in Holiness and Righteousness all my Days ; forsaking every evil Way, and studying above all Things to do
that

44 *A Thanksgiving after*
that which is well-plea-
sing in thy Sight. I am
heartily grieved at the
Sins and Vanities of my
former Life, and do
here solemnly renounce
them all ; more espe-
cially those which I
have been hitherto
most guilty of, and to
which my own corrupt
Inclinations, or the
Snares and Temptati-
ons of the World, are
most like to betray
me for the Time to
come.

Recovery from Sickness. 45

come*. And, * Here confess
the Sins you have
been most guilty
of, and against
which you do
therefore particu-
larly Resolve.
in a Sense
of my own
Weakness and

Frailty, I earnestly im-
plore the Assistance of
thy Holy Spirit, to sub-
due my inordinate De-
sires, and break the
Power of all evil Ha-
bits, and to keep me
stedfast in every Pro-
mise and Resolution
that I made before
Thee, in the Day of my
Distress : All which I
do

46 *A Thanksgiving after*
do now, in thy Presence
most sincerely and
heartily Renew. And
I beseech Thee, let me
never be drawn to for-
get or neglect them, ei-
ther by the Cares and
Pleasures of this World,
or by the Hopes of a
long Continuance in
it ; but give me Grace
always to make Eter-
nity my chief Care and
Concern ; and let thy
late gracious Warning
of Mortality teach me
the

Recovery from Sicknefs. 47

the Uncertainty of my
Abode upon Earth,
and oblige me to live
in a daily Preparation
to die. That so having
duly profited by thy
Fatherly Chastisement,
and employing the Re-
mainder of my Days to
thy Glory, and the Sal-
vation of my own Soul,
I may be found watch-
ing, whenever my ap-
pointed Time shall
come, and may change
this frail State of Mor-
tality

48 *A Thanksgiving, &c.*
tality for an Immortal
Crown of Glory. All
which I humbly beg
of Thee, thro' the Me-
rits and Mediation of
Jesus Christ, my bles-
sed Saviour and Re-
deemer. *Amen.*

5 DE 60

F I N I S.

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